

MERRILL'S STORY BOOKS

JAN AND BETJE

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MERRILL'S STORY BOOKS

JAN AND BETJE

A STORY OF
TWO DUTCH CHILDREN

By
MAY EMERY HALL



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TO THE CHILDREN

If the American children who read this little story should glance through the pages of a Dutch book, I am quite sure they would exclaim, "How many *j*'s there are!" Indeed, this letter seems to be a great favorite in the quaint little country we are to visit. I doubt if you would pronounce it exactly right, though — not the first time, at any rate.

As we are to read a Dutch story, however, we want to give the Dutch names their Dutch sounds, do we not? Suppose, then, at the start, we call Jan, Yŏn, and his sister Betje, Bět'yŭh. The other little children of the *j* family — their cousin, Aartje, their schoolmate, Mietje, and the baby of the windmill house, Mar-

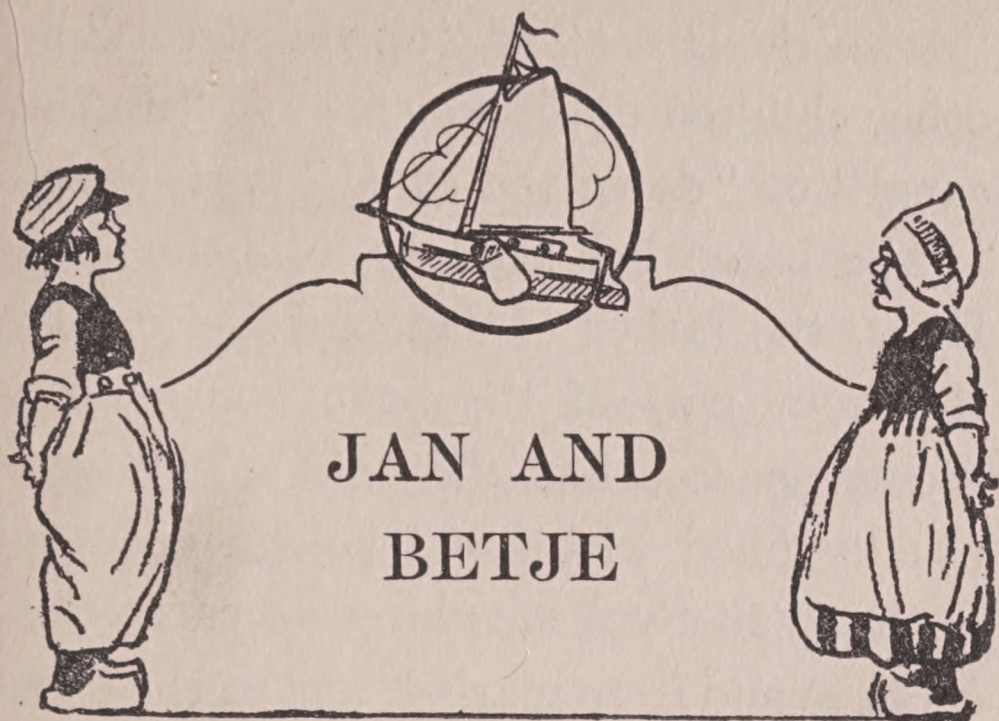
retje, — we will call in turn Art'yŭh, Meet'yŭh, and Mar'rĕt yŭh.

The nearest your American tongue can pronounce Gouda, the name of the city of queer pipes, is Gow'da.

The coins Jan and Betje saved in their banks are very interesting. They collected cents, as you do, but their Dutch cent is worth less than half of your American cent. One hundred of the Dutch cents make a gulden (gool'dĕn) instead of a dollar, and a twenty-five-cent piece is a kwartje (quart'yŭh).

If Jan and Betje were speaking of klompen, their wooden shoes, they would call them klōmp'ĕn; kaas or cheese, kās; poort or gate, poort; and oud or old, owd. I know these words sound queer to you. On the other hand, the little Van Eycks would pronounce *boter*, meaning butter, bō'ter; and *pijp* and *boek* exactly like your own *pipe* and *book*.

In fact, you will find that in some ways Jan and Betje are not strangers to you. I hope that in reading their story, you will enjoy getting acquainted with them.



CHAPTER I

THE FLOATING HOME

Jan and Betje were Dutch children. Jan was ten years old, his sister two years younger. They first opened their blue eyes on a flat boat, or barge, on one of the canals of Holland. This was not only their first home, but the only one they had ever known. Instead of talking about

“down the street” or “up the street,” as other children do, it was always “up the canal” or “down the canal” with them.

The barge belonged to Wilhelm Van Eyck, the father of Jan and Betje. In the front part of the boat was a deep roomy space called the hold. This was usually filled with great golden cheeses. Father Van Eyck was hired to carry this cargo to and from market, and so the boat helped him earn a living for himself and Mother Van Eyck, and their boy and girl.

“We don’t want anything better than our boat, do we, Jan?” Betje would often say.

“No, indeed,” her brother always answered. “It’s ever so much better than a house. Just think how stupid it must be for poor children who have to live on dry land — always in the same place. I should get so tired of it!”

“And I, too. We are much better off

as we are. We can begin the day with green fields, cattle, and windmills around us and perhaps go to sleep that very same night in a great big city like Rotterdam or Amsterdam."

"What do we want of a yard?" Betje went on. "Don't we have the deck, which is much nicer?"

"I should say so. It's plenty large enough for games."

"And for mother's washing."

"And surely nobody could have a better pet than our Piet."

Piet was the family dog. He was very fond of the children and would romp with them by the hour. But it was not always playtime with Piet. Most dogs have to do their share of the work in Holland, and so whenever Father Van Eyck went to market to buy food for the family, Piet pulled the cart. In his harness of rope and leather, he would trudge steadily

along the narrow Dutch streets by the side of his master, like the good, faithful dog he was.

The children's parents were very glad that their boy and girl were so contented. It made them happy. Like Jan and Betje, they too thought their boat quite the nicest home in the world.

It really was as comfortable as a house. The deck was the living-room on pleasant days. Here Mother Van Eyck sewed, Father Van Eyck smoked, the children played, and they all ate their meals. There was a covered cabin, but they seldom went into it except to sleep.

That cabin was like a doll's house, for all the world! If you had gone into it, you would have had to hunt for the beds. They were really cupboard beds, built in the walls, and hidden by bright curtains. Many homes in Holland have no other kind of bed. The floor of the cabin room



was covered with gay oilcloth, and there were shelves of blue and white dishes and pieces of shining brass. There was a pretty tile, too, on the shelf. This was a square piece of glazed pottery which Mother Van Eyck used as a stand for her teapot.

Two tiny windows were draped in snow-white muslin. The children's mother never allowed the window curtains to get soiled. It would be a shame for a Dutch housewife to grow careless about so important a matter! Usually there were jars of flowers at the windows — bright tulips, hyacinths, or lovely big roses. A pet bird in a cage made music all day long.

Was it any wonder that Jan and Betje wanted no better place in which to live than their floating home?

CHAPTER II

PAINTING THE BOAT

"I've some extra work to do to-day," said Father Van Eyck one morning, "and I'm going to ask you to help me, Jan."

"Quite right," said his mother. "All play and no work is not a good thing for boys and girls — or grown-ups, either."

Jan was very willing to be of use to his father, who was always so good to him.

"What shall I do first?" he asked.

"Just wait a bit, son," laughed Father Van Eyck. "I was just about to tell you. Our boat needs a new dress. Her colors are so faded they look quite shabby. Do you think you could help me put on some new paint?"

"O, yes," cried the delighted Jan.

Never before had his father asked him to do the work of a man!

"What color are you going to have, father?" he said.

"That is for the rest of you to decide. As long as the paint is new and fresh, I don't care what color it is."

"Let's get bright blue, then."

"O, I like orange better," spoke up Betje.

"And you, mother?" asked Father Van Eyck.

"I was just going to say pink," she replied.

"Then we'll paint it all three colors."

So it was decided to paint the boat in stripes — first one of pink, then blue, then orange. People living in America would think it a funny sort of dress to give the barge; not so in Holland, the home of bright colors.

The boat was tied fast to a wharf for the

day, and the proud Jan went with his father to the paintshop and helped select the paint. They bought a large can of each of the three colors and two good stout brushes.

“May I carve my initials on the handle of my brush?” asked Jan.

“Yes,” said his father.

After ten minutes' work, the brush bore three clean-cut letters — J. V. E. — which, of course, stood for Jan Van Eyck.

That day was almost like a holiday. Jan and his father worked hard, it is true, but it was fun all the same. As they painted, they sat or stood up in a small boat which they moved along the side of the barge from time to time. Above them, Betje and her mother leaned over the side of the barge to see how the work was coming on. The task was finished late in the afternoon.

“To-morrow, after the paint has begun

to dry," said Jan's father, "we will paint the name."

Early the next morning, the two workers were at it again. The name had ten letters. Father Van Eyck first outlined them with a heavy pencil so that, when finished, they would all be of the same size and height. Then Jan began at one end of the name and his father at the other. When they came together, there stood ten straight letters which spelled

WILHELMINA.

"I'm glad our boat is named after the queen," said Betje.

The others felt the same way. They were proud of their gracious ruler; but you may be sure they were just as proud of the boat named for her.

CHAPTER III

BETJE AT WORK

The next morning Jan was walking back and forth on the deck of the *Wilhelmina* with his hands in his trousers pockets. He felt several inches taller than the day before. Had he not helped paint the boat and made a good job of it?

Betje watched him with a rather sober look on her little round face. She was always proud of her brother, but she didn't half like it when he looked and acted so much older than herself. She knew very well there was only two years' difference in their ages.

"Mother," she said softly, stepping over to where Mother Van Eyck was preparing vegetables for dinner, "Jan has

begun to do grown-up work for father. Why cannot I do something for you?"

Mother Van Eyck laid down her dish of carrots and smiled pleasantly.

"Ah, that is what I like to hear, little daughter," said she. "It shows you are a true Dutch housewife at heart. You may begin your grown-up tasks this very day."

"Right now?"

"Right now. Hasten and fetch the new apron I made you for your last birthday."

It did not take Betje many seconds to scramble down the steep steps that led to the cabin. From a box covered with flowered paper, she carefully drew out the treasured apron that had never yet been worn. It had blue figures on a white background and bands of plain blue for trimming. The neck was low and the sleeves short, but the apron was long enough to cover Betje's dress. What she

liked best about it were two generous pockets. Betje believed there couldn't be another such beautiful apron in all Holland! She went up on deck again so that her mother could button it in the back. Then, clasping her mother's hand, Betje returned to the cabin, ready for work.

"Beginning to-day," said Mother Van Eyck, "I am going to let you take care of my nicest dishes and brass. Yes, you may even wash my very best tile that Aunt Marna bought in Delft, where the famous potteries are."

Betje gasped with delight.

"O, I will be so very, very careful, mother," she said.

"Of that I am sure," Mother Van Eyck answered, "else I would not trust you with them. See, you must scour the brass so."

As she spoke, she took up her favorite

little flat dish, or porringer, which had two fancy side handles.

“Here are the soft cloths. With one, you must rub on this soft paste, then rinse the dish in hot water, wipe it dry, and give it a last polish with another clean cloth.”

“And is this to be done every day, mother?”

“What a foolish question, child! Of course. Have you not seen me do it ever since you can remember?”

“Yes, mother.”

“It is true there are some housekeepers who give their brass a rub only now and then — perhaps once a week — but the women of my family and your father’s also have ever been more particular.”

Mother Van Eyck went back to her work on deck. Betje was left alone. She washed and scrubbed and polished until she was quite red in the face. As she

worked, she made up stories about herself, making believe she was really a grown woman and that the pretty dishes were her very own. How she admired them! And how she held on to them with all her might! It would never do to break such wonderful treasures.

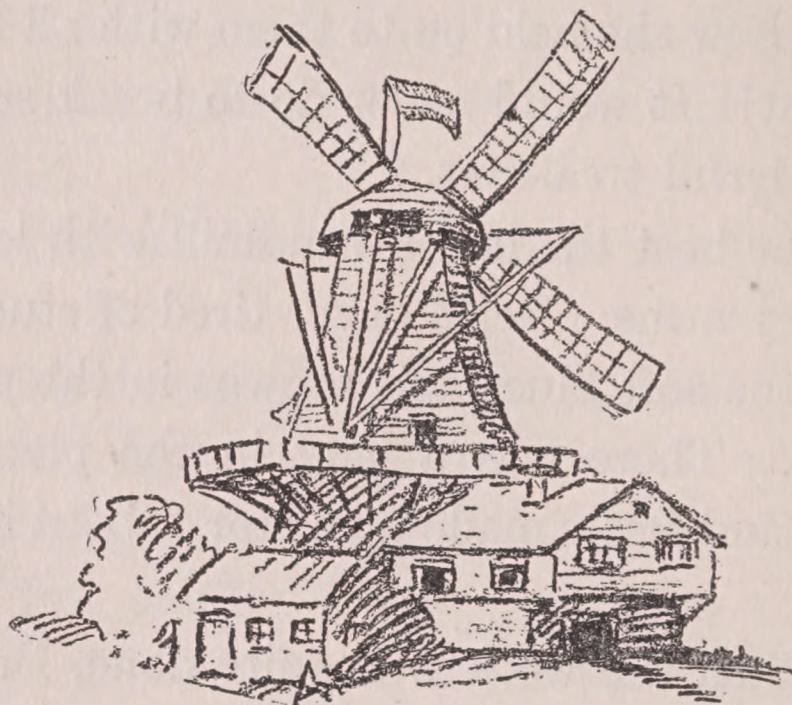
The best tile had a windmill with long flappy arms. Betje never tired of studying the soft blues and browns in the picture. There was a lady in the picture also and Betje made up a story about her, too.

When the work was quite done, Betje folded up her Dutch apron carefully, put it back in the box, and went in search of her mother.

“Well done, little daughter,” Mother Van Eyck greeted her, and she kissed Betje heartily.

Jan was still walking back and forth. Betje stole softly up behind him and

linked her arm in his. At last she felt almost as old and tall as he did!



CHAPTER IV

THE SECRET

A few moments later, Betje heard her mother's voice calling to her.

"Come here, child," she said, "and take off your klompen. I just noticed as you passed by that they are in pretty bad condition."

Betje removed her wooden shoes as her mother directed. Mother Van Eyck looked them over and shook her head gravely.

"They are past mending, I fear," she said. "Your father will have to buy you some new ones at the very next stopping place."

"Then I will throw these into the canal," said Betje.

“Don’t do that, Betje,” spoke up Jan.
“I know of something better.”

“What?”

“It’s a secret.”

“O, good!” cried Betje, clapping her hands in glee.

Jan drew her away to the bow of the boat so that his mother could not hear what he said. Betje listened to her brother eagerly.

“Father had some paint left yesterday,” began Jan. “Let’s ask him for it. You take one klomp and paint it orange, and I’ll take the other and paint it blue.”

“What shall we do with them after that?” asked Betje.

“Use them for banks. Mother will let us keep them on the shelf, I know.”

“O, yes,” agreed Betje. “And mother said if I helped her every day as much as I did this morning, she would give me a cent now and then.”

“Father promised me the same thing,” added Jan.

“St. Nicholas Day will be coming next December,” Betje went on, “and then we shall need some money to buy presents for mother and father.”

“I know already what we ought to buy for father,” said Jan. “Some green velvet slippers for Sundays. His best pair is wearing out.”

“I will knit some socks of the same color to go with them,” said Betje. “But what shall we get for mother?”

“We’ll have to think that up by and by. There’s plenty of time. It is now only the first of August, so we have four whole months in which to get ready for St. Nicholas Day. First, let’s see if father will let us have the paint.”

Father Van Eyck promised that the children should have it as soon as he had a chance to buy the new klompen for Betje.

Not many days later, an orange shoe and a blue shoe decorated the shelf in the cabin. Just before going to bed, Betje climbed up in a chair to have a last look at her bank. As she picked it up, something rattled. She looked inside. There was a coin — not a copper cent or even a nickel five-cent piece, but a bright silver ten-cent piece with the queen's head on it!

Jan lost no time taking a peep into *his* bank. It also held a ten-cent piece, bright and new, like Betje's. Never had he felt so rich before.

"Who put them here?" asked Jan of his mother.

"Ah, that is for you to find out," was her reply. "Somebody else can have a secret as well as you and Betje."

CHAPTER V

THROUGH THE CANALS

The *Wilhelmina*, in her new coat of fresh paint, was now on her way to a large cheese factory. Here Father Van Eyck was to take on a load of cheeses and then carry them to the cheese market. In the same way, other bargemen were taking their cargoes from many different factories to the market, and later, on market day, all the cheeses would be sold in a big open square.

Very slowly the *Wilhelmina* moved through the canals. The barge had a sail, it is true — a heavy, dark red one; but it was of use only when a stiff breeze was blowing. For days at a time it would remain furled. For the most part, the

Van Eyck boat had to be either pulled or pushed.

"Please let me pull with you, father," Jan begged one day.

Father Van Eyck was just putting a strong rope over his shoulders and under his arms when his boy spoke. He did not answer at once.

"What do you think, mother?" he said at last. "Is our Jan too young to tug at the rope?"

"I should say not," answered Mother Van Eyck. "He is strong and tall and able to help you. Some day he will have to learn and he may as well begin now."

One end of the rope was already tied to the bow of the boat. With the other, Father Van Eyck made a double harness, and soon he and Jan were pulling the *Wilhelmina* through the water streets. They walked side by side along a little footpath near the water's edge.



“Why is Holland covered with canals?” asked Jan.

“Because most of our land is lower than the level of the ocean,” replied Father Van Eyck. “If it were not for the canals, the water that comes from springs and rains would settle all over the country. To carry it off and keep the land dry, these channels have been cut in all directions.”

“But what carries the water from the fields to the canals?” was Jan’s next question.

“Pumps,” replied Father Van Eyck. “And back of the pumps are the wind-mills that keep the pumps going.”

Jan thought hard for a minute.

“But I should think,” he said after a little while, “that even if the canals carried the water to the sea, it would flow back again.”

“Ah, but there are strong sea-walls all

along the coast to shut the water out," was Father Van Eyck's answer. "They are built of earth and stone and are called dikes. I will show you one some day."

Jan's work for that day ended at dinner time.

"This afternoon," said Father Van Eyck, "I am going to pole the boat instead of pulling it. You have earned a good rest, Jan, and may sit down with Betje and look on while I work."

"May I not help you as I did this morning?" Jan asked.

"The pole is too heavy for you, my boy," his father answered. "You can manage it better when you are a few years older."

Jan found he was rather tired, after all, and he was glad enough to sit down by the side of Betje. He and his sister watched their father take a long stout pole, carry it to the side of the barge, and

lower one end until it touched the bottom of the canal. He then pushed on the other end with all his strength. This sent the *Wilhelmina* forward. Now and then Father Van Eyck pulled the pole out of the water, dropped it in a different place, and pushed as before. The work was repeated again and again. Thus, little by little, the *Wilhelmina* made her way through the canals. Jan was anxious for the day to come when he could handle a pole himself.

“Then you shall sit and do nothing all day long,” he promised his father.

CHAPTER VI

BRIDGES AND LOCKS

While on her way to the cheese factory, the *Wilhelmina* passed under many bridges. Some of these were called toll bridges, which meant that every boatman must pay a small sum of money, to get by the bridge.

“Are we going to pass a toll bridge to-day, father?” Betje asked one morning.

“Yes.”

“I hope it is Baas Vleeck’s bridge, then.”

“The very same.”

“Then will you give me the two cents so that I may have them all ready? I will put them in my apron pocket and take good care not to lose them.”

“Is it your turn to pay to-day?” asked her father.

“Yes, don’t you remember? Jan paid yesterday.”

Father Van Eyck handed Betje two copper coins.

“The paying out of money pleases you better than it does me, little one,” he said. “It is well that some bridges in Holland are free.”

“O, but father, I always like to pass Baas Vleeck’s bridge.”

“I know why,” put in Jan slyly. “He always gives you something back for the money.”

“It isn’t that alone,” answered Betje almost tearfully. “He always remembers who I am and I like him.”

Soon afterwards, Baas Vleeck’s bridge came in sight. It was a bridge which divided so that the central part swung around in the canal to make a passage for

the barges. On this portion stood the kindly bridgekeeper.

“Ah, my little Betje once more,” he called out with a broad smile on his round Dutch face. “Good morning to you.”

Betje, blushing and happy, held up a chubby hand in which the two cents were clasped tightly.

“Some money for *me*?” said Baas Vleeck with an air of surprise, as if he had never been known to take a coin from any one before.

Betje nodded her head up and down. Then the bridgekeeper lowered a wooden shoe which hung from a pole, and Betje carefully dropped the two cents inside. Baas Vleeck then put his hand deep in his trousers pocket.

“I almost forgot,” he said. “Somebody put these in my pocket for you.”

He tossed her two little squares of sugar neatly wrapped in white paper.

“Good catch!” he called out as the *Wilhelmina* moved on.

Sugar might seem a queer gift to children in some parts of the world, but in Holland, where it is somewhat scarce and costly, poor children do not get it every day.

“Thank you so much,” cried Betje, and Jan called, “Thank you,” too.

“We’ll have them in our chocolate at dinner time,” said Betje. “Can’t you cut each piece in two, Jan, with your knife? Then there’ll be just enough to go round.”

Jan was glad to do so. As they sipped their chocolate that noon, the whole family thought what a very nice man the bridgekeeper was.

“I have a pleasant surprise for you, youngsters,” said Father Van Eyck after dinner was cleared away. “The *Wilhelmina* must go down a step this afternoon.”

Who ever heard of a boat going down steps? American children would laugh at the idea, I know, and say it could not be done, but Jan and Betje knew what their father was talking about. They were quite used to water steps, or locks, as they are called. In Holland, wherever the canal changes from a higher to a lower level, these locks are always to be found.

“I think we are coming to the lock now,” called out Father Van Eyck not long afterwards.

Jan and Betje looked ahead and saw two gates before them. When the boat came close, the gates swung each side to let the *Wilhelmina* through and then shut again. The children saw still another pair of gates beyond the first ones. These, too, were closed.

“We are really in a water room, aren’t we, mother?” said Betje.

“Yes, dear,” answered Mother Van Eyck.

Slowly the water was allowed to flow out of the water room through an opening at the bottom of the second pair of gates. This made the barge go down and down, somewhat like a very slow elevator. When she reached the lower level, the gates were opened and the *Wilhelmina* continued her journey.

The very next day, the boat went up, instead of down, a step. She passed into a water room as before, only water was allowed to come in from the higher level instead of going out at the lower. This took the *Wilhelmina* up and up until she reached the higher level of the canal. The gates then opened for her to pass through, and the good boat went on her way.

CHAPTER VII

GOING TO MARKET

At last the *Wilhelmina* was tied to a wharf not far from the cheese factory. As soon as the boat was made fast, Father Van Eyck went to tell the men who hired him that he had arrived. They let him have several helpers to take the loads of yellow cheeses from the factory to the boat. The cheeses were so heavy that it took three or four of those men to push the handcart through the streets.

Soon the work of loading began. Jan and Betje with their mother looked on.

"How good and fresh the cheeses smell!" exclaimed Betje.

"Yes," her brother answered. "I should not want our boat to carry any

other kind of cargo. Coal is too dirty, and so is peat; and stone is not a bit interesting."

Slowly and carefully, Father Van Eyck arranged the cheeses in layers in the hold.

"Why are you so careful about it, father?" Jan asked. "I should think you could save time by throwing them."

"Ah, but they are yet soft," was the answer, "and it would never do to break them."

"Is that why you put the boards between the layers, too?" continued Jan.

"Exactly," replied Father Van Eyck.

"Didn't you tell us, mother," spoke up Betje, "that you once saw some cheeses made out in the country?"

"Yes," said Mother Van Eyck. "Those were dairy cheeses, not factory cheeses, like these your father is handling. I wish you could have seen the milk room that I saw, child! The floor and walls

were made of tiles, and it was as clean as clean could be. Even the barn was as neat as anybody's living room. It had dainty curtains at the windows and I couldn't see a speck of dirt anywhere."

"I should call that a pretty fine home for cows," said Betje.

"It was, indeed," was Mother Van Eyck's reply. "Many boys and girls haven't one so good."

The *Wilhelmina* was soon loaded and under way once more. Happy days followed. No two were just alike. Every night, before going to bed, Jan and Betje would wonder what would happen the next day that would be new or interesting. Something always did happen, even on the quietest of days.

A part of each day Jan helped Father Van Eyck pull the boat, but there was plenty of time left for him to play with Betje. Sometimes other children joined

in their games. This happened when another barge was tied alongside their own.

“Won’t you please come over and play with us?” Betje would call out shyly to the other canal-boat family. You may be sure the invitation was always accepted with delight.

When Jan and his sister were alone, they often amused themselves guessing how many boats the *Wilhelmina* would meet in the course of the day. They saw more barges, of course, than any other kind of boat. At such times, Father Van Eyck and the other bargemen sent friendly greetings across the water. If there were children on the other barges (and there usually were), they waved their hands to Jan and Betje and the little Van Eycks never failed to wave back.

Other boats besides barges moved along the canals. Now and then a light sailboat

with spread canvas came within hailing distance. It looked like an immense bird skimming over the surface of the water.

There were fishing boats, too. These were sometimes crowded so close together that you could hardly tell which mast belonged to which ship. When Jan and Betje tried to count them, they had to do it, not once or twice, but many times. Now Betje came nearer the right number; again Jan proved the better guesser.

So good a time did Jan and Betje have, that before they knew it, they had reached the market place.

CHAPTER VIII

MARKET DAY

Jan and Betje were up bright and early the next morning, for it was market day. They were very happy, for they knew they would have a chance to play on land. When they first left the boat, they hardly knew how to act. The pavements with little uneven Dutch bricks were so very different from the smooth deck of the barge! Many a time would the children have tumbled had not their klompen been broad and steady.

There were ever so many things to do around the market place. First Jan and Betje watched the cheese men. It was great fun. Father Van Eyck and his helpers threw the cheeses as fast as they

could to another set of men. The golden balls sometimes flew faster than the eye could follow them.

“O, they will surely miss their aim and let one fall!” Jan cried out excitedly to his mother, who was also looking on.

“No, indeed,” said Mother Van Eyck. “They have had too much training for that.” And she was right. Not a single ball did anyone miss.

Then the children watched some men rubbing the cheeses with an oily cloth to make them look bright and shiny, before they were laid out in regular rows in the market place.

The selling was the best part of it all. Jan and Betje watched one of the men who had come to the market place to buy cheese. He walked back and forth among the different piles, looking them over carefully and now and then picking up a cheese to examine it more closely.



“The cheese must look, smell, and feel just right,” said Jan, “before he will buy it. And he’s right, too. I don’t blame him for being particular.”

“He must think that pile is worth buying,” answered Betje, “for he is telling the man who wants to sell it how much he will pay for the lot.”

“Yes, and the price seems right,” said Jan. “Now watch.”



Then the strangest thing happened! The seller held out his hand so that the buyer could slap it, and the buyer in turn let the seller slap *his* hand. Slap, slap! The sound reached the children's ears from all over the market place, where other buyers and sellers were completing their bargains.

"O, good!" suddenly called out Betje.
"Father's cheeses are all sold."

It was true. They were sold early in the day, for Wilhelm Van Eyck never handled any but the best cheeses.

“They are carrying them to the scales now to be weighed,” said Jan. “It will be some time before they are packed again in the boat. Let’s take a walk.”

“All right,” said Betje gladly. She was quite anxious to peep into the shop windows. So, with Piet at their heels, the children started out.

Such pretty things as they saw behind the glass windows — wonderful necklaces and bracelets, toy boats, soldiers, animals, bright ribbons, pictures, and story books! They wandered on and on, forgetting all about the *Wilhelmina* and dinner time. Suddenly a frightened look came over Betje’s pretty face.

“I don’t know the way back to the market place, Jan,” she said, ready to cry.

“O, don’t be afraid,” answered her

brother, making himself as tall as he could. "I do."

He took Betje by the hand and turned down the next street. They walked to the end of it and then made a second turn. Things didn't begin to look familiar, somehow, as Jan thought they would, but he didn't want Betje to know they were lost. As he was trying to make up his mind what to do next, Piet set up a furious barking.

"I know the way," he seemed to say in his dog language. "Follow me. I came with you both to take care of you. Didn't you know that?"

Now Piet had never been lost in his life, so the Van Eyck children felt safe in letting him take the lead. It was fortunate they did.

In less than ten minutes the good dog led Jan and Betje back to the *Wilhelmina*. The smell of cooking food greeted them

as they touched the deck. Dinner was just ready and Mother Van Eyck was beginning to wonder what had become of her boy and girl.

“But I never worry when Piet is with you,” she said.

Jan and Betje told their story. Now and then they stopped to tell Piet what a good dog he was. Do you wonder that when they had finished, Mother Van Eyck gave the pet a double share of dinner?

CHAPTER IX

RETURNING FROM MARKET

After dinner, the little Van Eycks played on land again for a while. Before the close of the afternoon, however, they heard their father's call, "All aboard! All aboard!" This was the way he always warned the children that it was time for the *Wilhelmina* to be under way.

Father Van Eyck had been engaged by one of the buyers to carry his cheeses to his warehouse. The work of filling up the hold had been finished, and now the barge was headed for the warehouse.

"I hope we are going to Jacob's warehouse this time," said Betje.

"We are," answered Father Van Eyck. Jacob was the children's favorite friend,

the head man at one of the cheese warehouses. He and his helpers would remove the cheeses from the boat to the warehouse, when the *Wilhelmina* reached the end of her journey. Jan and Betje were on the lookout for him long before the barge was tied to the wharf, for Jacob was quite likely to be working near the canal.

“There he is! I see him first!” cried Jan.

“Halloa, Jacob,” shouted Betje at the same time. “May we go to the warehouse with you to-day?”

“I’ll see about it,” was the answer.

Jan and Betje knew that was as good as a promise. Soon after they landed, Jacob had each child by the hand and was on the way to the warehouse. Piet went along too, of course. Jacob let the children have a peep into the big, high room whose sides and center were taken up with racks.

“The shelves have openings, haven’t they, Jacob?” noticed Jan.

“Yes; that is so the cheeses will stay in place and will have the air on all sides,” said Jacob.

“Why don’t you sell them right away instead of letting them stay here?” asked Betje.

“Ah, they need to dry and so have their flavor improved,” was Jacob’s answer. “This is called ripening. We have to be very careful that the warehouse is neither too hot nor too cold so that the cheeses will turn out just right.”

“It looks as if it might take a long time to eat them all up,” said Jan with big eyes.

“If they all stayed in Holland, it would; but some of these may go as far away as distant America.”

“I have heard my father say,” spoke up Betje, “that by the time the round Edam

cheeses get to American children, they are varnished a bright red on the outside."

"It is even so. Do you want to hear a little rhyme that tells the story?"

"O, yes," the children cried out together.

Jacob cleared his throat and sang in a deep voice:

"This little cheese crossed the water,
This little cheese stayed at home;
This little cheese had a coat of red,
This little cheese had none."

"Once more!" begged Jan and Betje.
Good-natured Jacob repeated the lines:

"This little cheese crossed the water,
This little cheese stayed at home;
This little cheese had a coat of red,
This little cheese had none."

"Just once more!" pleaded the children.
Before Jacob was given a rest, he had sung the rhyme so many times that he was quite hoarse.

CHAPTER X

WINDMILL FRIENDS

Not many days afterward, Jan and Betje said good-by to Jacob. Their boat was now bound for the cheese factory once more, where it would take on a new load. Factory, market place, warehouse — this was the round the *Wilhelmina* repeated over and over.

“I must go to market to-day,” said Father Van Eyck one morning. “Our vegetables and groceries are getting low.”

As he started to make the boat fast, crash, crash, went the *Wilhelmina* into the landing place. Splinters flew far and wide. Mrs. Van Eyck came running up the cabin stairs with a worried look on her face. Jan and Betje followed.

"What, then, is the matter, my good man?" Mother Van Eyck asked, all out of breath.

"Nothing much. Only some crumbling, rotten boards have given way."

"It is a shame for the village people to let their wharf get in such a condition before they mend it," said Mother Van Eyck.

"I think so, too; but I shall mend it myself," said her husband.

"I should say not," replied Mother Van Eyck.

"I would feel better about it, mother. Besides, there is a sawmill not far away where I can get some new timber."

A little boy about nine years old and a little girl about seven, who had been playing by the side of the canal, stopped their games when the crash came. They now stood looking bashfully at Jan and Betje, as if they would like to speak to them.

At last, the little girl whispered something in the boy's ear. He looked up at Mother Van Eyck.

"What is it, child?" she asked kindly.

"My sister wants to know if your little boy and girl cannot come over to our house while the father is patching the wharf."

"Where do you live?"

"In the windmill close by." He pointed to it.

"O, say 'yes,' mother," pleaded Betje, before her mother had a chance to answer. "Jan and I have never visited a windmill."

"Very well, then," said Mother Van Eyck. "Only you must be sure to come back when father waves his hand to you."

"We will," replied Betje.

So she and Jan walked over to the windmill with the boy and girl.

"What is your name?" asked Betje on the way.

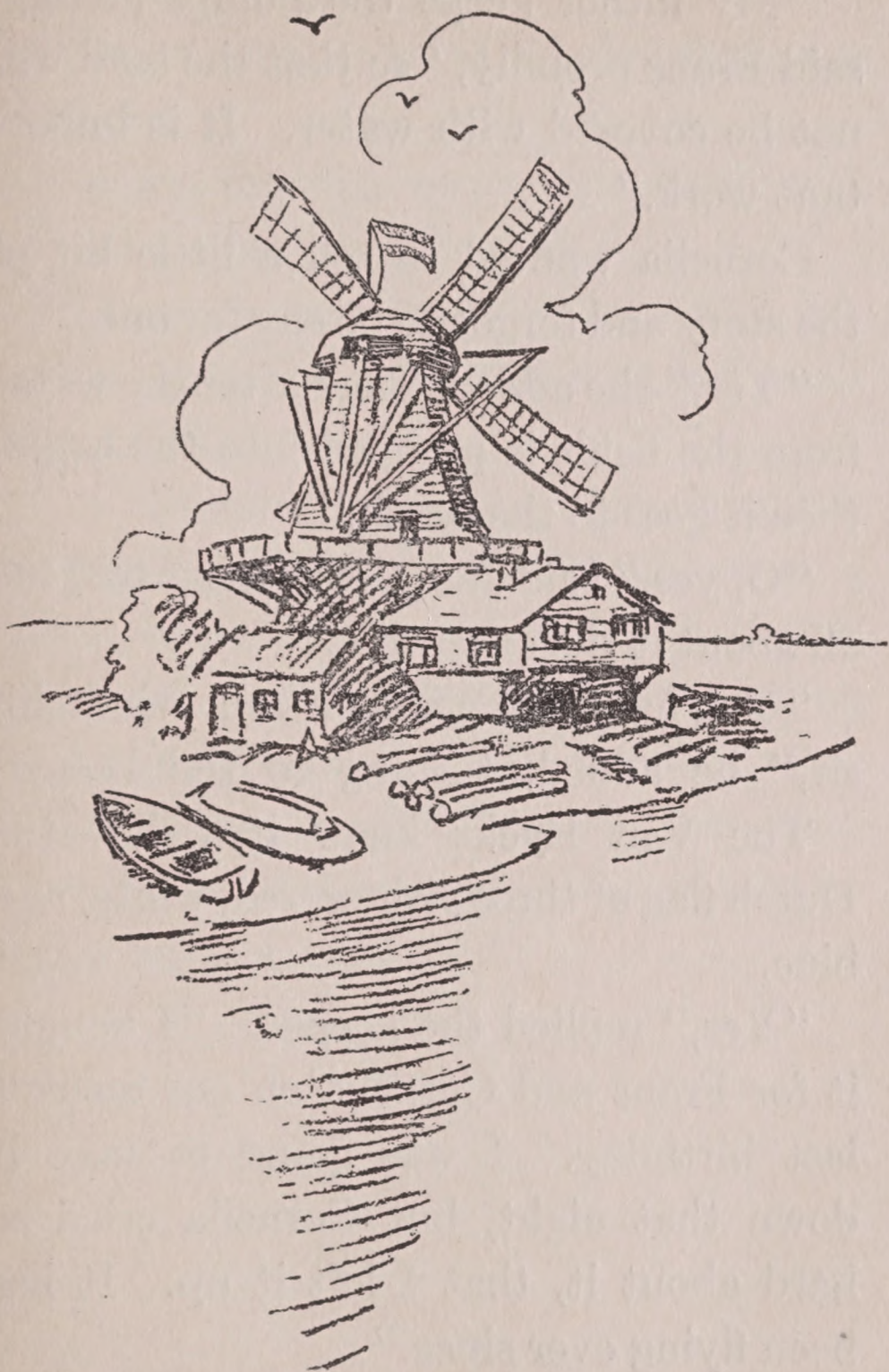
“Cornelia,” replied the little girl, timidly.

“I am Frans,” said the boy, without waiting to be asked.

“And we have a baby sister at home,” said Cornelia with a little more courage. “Her name is Marretje.”

They had reached the windmill by this time. Jan and Betje were surprised to find it was a real house, with pleasant, comfortable rooms inside. The children’s mother had seen the little Van Eycks coming and opened the door to welcome them. Jan and Betje felt at home at once. The good woman answered all their questions (and they asked about a hundred) and showed them into every room.

Being a boy, Jan was most interested in the pumps he saw in one part of the windmill. Here they found the keeper himself. He shook hands with the children.



“My father keeps the pumps going,” said Frans proudly, “so that the land will not be covered with water. It is important work.”

Cornelia wanted to tell a little bit of the story and forgot to be shy for once.

“Yes,” she added, “and after the water from the fields is pumped into the canal, then it goes to the ocean.”

“O, yes,” said Jan, “my father told me all about it the other day.”

“You have a fine flag on your windmill, sir,” he added, turning to the keeper.

The Van Eycks knew it well — the Dutch flag of three stripes, red, white, and blue.

“Yes,” replied the keeper. “I bought it for Frans and Cornelia on our queen’s last birthday. I was going to take it down that night, but Cornelia cried so hard about it, that I left it up. It has been flying ever since.”

Cornelia crept up close to her father. She put her small hand into his large one lovingly.

“When the flag wears out, father will buy us a new one,” she said.

“How do you know so much?” her father answered back, pinching her small nose teasingly.

“A windmill must be a splendid place to live,” said Betje. “It would seem a queer home to me, though. I should never get used to those long arms turning round and round past my windows.”

She little thought that to Frans and Cornelia a boat seemed an even funnier home than a windmill!

CHAPTER XI

THE PARTY

After Jan and Betje had been all over the windmill, the keeper's wife prepared a little lunch for the children. She sliced a loaf of gingerbread and from a squatty blue and white jug poured out four mugfuls of rich frothy milk. Then she opened a pretty tin box of sweet Dutch cookies and passed them around.

It was a pleasant little party. Baby Marretje seemed to enjoy it as much as did the older children. She crowed and clapped her hands every minute. With her chubby fingers she crumbled up bits of gingerbread and made Betje open her mouth for them.

"Isn't she a darling?" said Betje. "I don't think I ever saw a nicer baby."

"Why, of course not," said little Cornelia in surprise. "There never *was* a nicer baby than our baby."

"Did you notice our storks' nest on the roof of the windmill before you came in?" asked Frans of Jan and Betje.

"No," they answered together.

"You must then, when you go out," Frans went on. "You know wherever these birds stop, they bring good luck. We have found out for ourselves that it is so."

"O, do tell us about it," said Jan, very much interested.

"Well, in the spring," began Frans, "grandmother sent Cornelia a pretty gold pin for her birthday. Mother let her put on her best dress, fasten the pin at her neck, and go out for a walk. By the time she got back, the pin was gone. We couldn't find it anywhere. Cornelia cried herself to sleep that night."

“And the next night, too,” put in little Cornelia.

“Then,” said Frans, going on with his story, “Cornelia begged father to build a nest for the storks on our roof. He laughed and said that would not bring the pin back, but he did it just the same to please us.

“After it was finished, Cornelia and I watched and watched to see if the storks wouldn’t come to us. I can tell you we were glad when we saw two of them fly over our heads and then come straight down into our nest as if they had always lived there.”

“And did Cornelia find her pin?” asked Betje, eager for the end of the story.

“That very same day,” answered Frans. “And we have had nothing but nice things happen ever since.”

“I know what I’m going to do,” spoke up Betje. “I’ll ask father if we cannot

build a storks' nest on the *Wilhelmina* next year."

"O, that would be great sport," said Jan. "And we wouldn't have to climb up on any housetop to watch the birds. But there is father now."

The other children looked out of the window and spied Father Van Eyck not far away. He first waved his arms, then formed a trumpet with his hands and shouted through it:

"Hal.....loa.....Jan.....Bet.....je.....Hal....
.....loa....."

"Yes, we're coming," Jan shouted back, running to the door.

Frans and Cornelia didn't want Jan and Betje to leave at all, nor did Baby Marretje. She tried hard to hold Betje back by tugging at her skirts. But Father Van Eyck was ready and the children knew they ought to obey him.

"We will come some other day," said

Betje, "if father goes through this canal again."

"I hope you will," answered the kind lady who had given them so good a time.

"Be sure not to forget the storks' nest," warned Frans, shaking his forefinger at Jan and Betje.

CHAPTER XII

WHEN MOTHER WAS YOUNG

That evening after the day's work was over, the Van Eycks were enjoying the summer twilight on the deck of their barge — Mother Van Eyck sitting, for once, with folded hands, Father Van Eyck puffing away at his long pipe, and the children begging for stories.

“O, do tell us about the time when you were a girl, mother,” pleaded Betje.

“But you have heard it for the thousandth time, dear.”

“I know, but it always seems like a new story, just the same.”

“Well, if you *will* hear it again, I suppose I must tell it to you.

“I was born and brought up in the little

village of Volendam. There all the men and boys earn their living by fishing. A quaint place it is, with low peaked houses. Often you will find a row of big nails along the edge of the roof where clothes are sometimes hung to dry. I remember how your Grandfather Van Vliet pounded such a row of nails along the roof of our own house."

"For clothes?" Jan asked, though he knew well what his mother would say.

"No, to hold our klompen. And a long row of nails it took, too."

"Tell us why you had to hang your shoes up outside," said Betje.

"Because Grandmother Van Vliet was very particular about her floors. She felt it would be a disgrace to have them tracked with dirt. So we children went about in our stocking feet except when we had money enough to buy cheap slippers. I dressed like the other girls, of course,

putting on all the petticoats I owned and wearing a white cap with wings on either side and five strings of coral beads around my neck."

"I bet you were pretty," cried Jan, giving his mother a tight squeeze; "for you are now."

Mrs. Van Eyck pretended not to hear.

"As we girls grew up," she went on, "there were sweetheart fisher-lads, of course."

"Altogether too many of them," grumbled Father Van Eyck between puffs of smoke.

Mother Van Eyck's cheeks grew pink.

"But I didn't want to marry one of them," she said with a toss of her head. "Fishing is a dangerous business, especially in winter, when the ice has to be broken through for a haul. Many men drop through the ice holes and are never heard of again."



“Like Uncle Hendrik,” the children reminded her, in one breath.

“Yes, and hard, indeed, has it been for your Aunt Mina ever since to take care of Aartje and little Mina. One day Wilhelm Van Eyck came along. Then I felt sure I should never make a good fisher-wife. I wanted to live on a canal boat, instead.”

“Did Grandfather Van Vliet think that would be a good thing?” one of the children asked.

“Not at first. He wanted me to stay in Volendam always, you see. But Wilhelm Van Eyck waited for me with the persistence of a true Dutchman. At last grandfather could hold out no longer. But he said your father must save up

enough money to buy a boat of his own instead of working for anybody else."

"And he did!" shouted Jan. "Didn't he, mother?"

"You are running ahead of the story, child. O, how we saved! No more beads or sweets for me! Every cent I could get I put in the bank."

"A real bank?" said Betje, as if she had not heard about it dozens of times.

"No, a gray stocking which I knit to hold the money. It was just as good as a klomp bank." She looked out of the corners of her eyes at the children as she spoke, and then went on with the story.

"The coins piled up slowly but surely until the stocking-bank was quite full.



Then the *Wilhelmina* was bought. Your father and I married and have lived happy ever after. That is all there is to the story."

"Except us," said Betje soberly.

"Why, to be sure! And a most important part of the story you are, too."

"What was it grandfather made you promise?" asked Jan. He meant that nothing should be left out.

"That I should always wear the Volendam dress. He was afraid I might forget my old home. As if I could!"

"You have kept your promise, haven't you, mother?" said Jan.

"Yes, my boy," was the answer.

"O, mother," said Betje, "isn't it about time for us to go to Volendam for our visit?"

"Have patience, little daughter," said Mother Van Eyck. "Only two weeks more and the next load of cheeses will be

taken care of. Then father thinks he can spare the time to take us to see grandfather and grandmother, Aunt Mina, and the little cousins.”

CHAPTER XIII

FAITHFUL PIET

After Mother Van Eyck's story was finished, Jan and Betje went to bed. They were soon fast asleep, dreaming happy dreams of Volendam. They slept too soundly to wake easily and so did not hear the noise that later aroused their father and mother.

"Bow-wow — bow-wow-ow-ow —" It was Piet barking loudly.

Now Piet was too well-behaved a dog to bark at nothing. Never before had he made such a noise in the middle of the night. What could it all mean?

"What *can* be the matter with the dog, mother?" said the bargeman.

"That I cannot guess," answered

Mother Van Eyck, "but be sure it is something, and the sooner we find out, the better."

Before either had time to dress, a cold nose was thrust against Father Van Eyck's hand and a great bundle of rough fur was wildly bouncing up and down, back and forth, in the tiny cabin room.

"O, do be quick!" Piet's beautiful brown eyes seemed to say as plainly as words.

"Yes, yes, good Piet," said Father Van Eyck, patting the dog's head. "In a second."

Piet's master and mistress were soon on the deck above. What they found there made them just as anxious and excited as Piet himself — a cloud of smoke and some curling tongues of flame! No wonder Piet had given a sharp alarm. The fire was creeping rapidly over the barrels and boxes containing vegetables

and other supplies which Father Van Eyck had brought from market the day before.

It was a good thing that Father Van Eyck had a clear, cool head. He saw the danger at once and knew that unless the fire was put out in a few minutes, the *Wilhelmina* herself might be ablaze.

"Buckets, mother!" was all he said.

Both of them ran to the stern of the boat. There stood three good-sized buckets, one inside the other. Each had a piece of strong rope tied to the handle. The buckets were meant for such a time as this, but never before had they been used.

"I'll take care of one," said Mother Van Eyck hurriedly.

In the twinkling of an eye she and Father Van Eyck had lowered the buckets over the side of the boat and filled them with water from the canal. When this was thrown on the fire, there was

some sputtering and the flames died down a little. Then they leaped up again.

“We must work faster,” said Father Van Eyck, all out of breath. “O, if we only had somebody to handle the third bucket!”

The words were scarcely out of his mouth when a sleepy boy, rubbing his eyes, appeared above the cabin stairway — Jan himself! One look at what his father and mother were doing and all sleep left his eyes for that night.

“I’ll manage the other bucket, father,” he cried, now wide-awake.

He seized it and soon had it filled with the canal water. It was a heavy load for him, but he didn’t stop to think of that for one instant. Little by little, the fire died down, turned from a bright to a dull red, then went out altogether. Jan felt he had done his share in saving the barge and looked proud enough when Father

Van Eyck called him his "brave fire-lad." Four grateful persons stood looking at the blackened wood, for by this time Betje had crept up on deck and had one chubby arm around good Piet's neck.

"I fear the fault was all mine," said Father Van Eyck soberly. "My pipe was the cause of the trouble. I thought I put it out last evening, but there must have been a few live sparks left. Very likely the oily polishing rag I used yesterday took fire from them. I promise never to be so careless again."

"But nothing harmful can ever happen to us while Piet is around," said Betje, giving her pet a good squeeze.

"I can well believe that," answered her father. "We have much to thank Piet for."

They all petted him and said nice things to him, while Piet thanked them with short yelps of delight.

“He shall have a second supper,” said Mother Van Eyck.

Late as it was, she then and there prepared something for the good dog to eat.

CHAPTER XIV

THE VISIT

The journey to Volendam was a trip Jan and Betje never forgot. They went by a different route from any they had taken before, so they had a chance to see many new things. The day came when they left all canals behind and found themselves in a big sheet of water.

"How much wider and rougher it is than the canals!" exclaimed Jan.

"What is it called, father?" asked Betje.

"The Zuyder Zee," he answered. "We are going to keep as close to the shore as possible. Do you see anything I told you about not long ago, Jan?"

Jan looked sharply at everything in

sight — the dancing blue waves, a sailboat near by, and a lazy windmill in the distance. Then his blue eyes fell upon something else.

“You mean the dike, of course, father,” he said, pointing with his forefinger along the shore, so that Betje would know where to look.

The children could make out a sloping wall built of strong stones crowded closely together. It stretched as far as they could see.

“The dike keeps the Zuyder Zee from flooding the low land beyond, Betje,” Jan explained to his sister.

Long before the *Wilhelmina* was tied to the wharf at Volendam, Jan and Betje caught sight of their grandfather.

It was Sunday, which was the reason the old man was not out with the fishing fleet. He stood on the wharf in his wooden shoes and baggy trousers, hands



in pockets and pipe in mouth. A broad smile lighted up his wrinkled face and he waved his pipe to let the twins know he saw them.

Jan and Betje scrambled ashore as fast as ever they could. They clasped their grandfather's hands and started home with him. Just outside the doorway stood Aunt Mina and the cousins waiting to welcome them. Grandmother Van Vliet was inside. She was as glad to see them as were the others.

Such a lot of talking and laughing as went on in that tiny house the next hour! All asked questions at the same time without waiting for anybody to answer them. Grandfather Van Vliet stopped up his ears with his fingers and pretended the noise was making him deaf. He made believe he was very cross, but Jan and Betje knew better.

“Going fishing with me to-morrow,

young one?" he said to Jan, patting him on the head.

"Out in the Zee?" Jan asked, all eagerness.

"Where else?" laughed the old man. "It will be too hard work for you to do much fishing yourself, but you can take lessons by watching us grown-ups."

Even to be allowed to go out in a real fishing boat was joy to Jan. Now, indeed, he felt like a grown man. He dreamed of nothing but fish all night. The next morning he could scarcely eat his breakfast, so eager was he to be off in his grandfather's boat. The blue water was sparkling in the sunshine and seemed to say, "Hurry up! Hurry up!"

It turned out to be a great day. The men made the best haul of the season. Grandfather Van Vliet pleased Jan by telling him that was because he was aboard. So anxious was Jan to tell



Betje all about it, he could scarcely wait to get back to the house.

“We went far out,” he began, out of breath. “The water was choppy, but I didn’t feel sick a minute. Such loads of fish as the men found in their nets, Betje! There were ever so many different kinds and colors — long, flat, wriggly, silvery, and dark.”

“Did you have your lunch on the boat?” asked Betje. “I think I like picnics better than fishing.”

“I should say I did. I never was hungrier in my life and never ate more bread and cheese than I did out there. Grandfather brought some herrings along, too, and they were good, I can tell you.”

“Will grandfather sell all the fish?” was Betje’s next question.

“He expects to,” replied her brother. “He and the men are now down by the shore, putting them in crates to be sent to

Amsterdam. To-morrow I am going with the boys to fish in the canals. I shall leave my stockings at home and carry bait in my klomp."

Jan was not the only one who had something to tell that day. Things had happened to Betje, too.

"A man painted my picture," she said to her brother, proudly. "I sat down by the water while he did it."

"What did he want it for?" said Jan.

"Why, he is an artist, Aunt Mina says, — a man who makes pictures and sells them for lots of money. I wanted to look my best and told him I would run indoors and change my klompen for my leather shoes. But he shook his head no."

"What a funny man — not to want you dressed up!"

"That's what I thought, but I heard him say he wished me to look as Dutch as I could. And see!"

Betje held out her hand and showed a bright silver kwartje — twenty-five cents!

“The artist man made me take it,” said Betje. “It will help towards my St. Nicholas money, won’t it?”

CHAPTER XV

TO THE CITY

The children's visit came to an end all too soon. They did not want to say good-bye to Volendam at all, but their father said he had taken as long a vacation as he ought to have.

Grandfather and Grandmother Van Vliet went to the wharf to see them all off and waved their hands as the *Wilhelmina* moved away.

"Don't forget you are coming again next year," called out little Aartje across the water.

"No, indeed," answered Jan and Betje.

The Van Eyck children now thought their father would go for another load of cheese. They were surprised, then, as

day after day passed without his saying a word about it. They wondered, too, why he and Mother Van Eyck so often had their heads together, talking earnestly in whispers. At last, one day Father Van Eyck beckoned to Jan and Betje to come to him.

“How would you like to live in a big city this fall and winter?” he asked.

The children didn't know what to make of the question. Never had such a thing been talked of before!

“O, that would be great,” said Jan, all excited.

“But how could we live without our boat?” said Betje, half ready to cry.

“Live on her, as we do now, little one,” was her father's reply. “We would never desert the *Wilhelmina*. Only instead of moving about, she would remain in one place. Your mother and I think it is high time our boy and girl went to school.”

"I have taught you both all that I know," said Mother Van Eyck.

"And I have done the same," said Father Van Eyck. "Now if we never stop in one place long enough for you to attend the same school twice, it will do you little good."

"No," agreed Mother Van Eyck, "and we want you to know more than we ever had the chance to learn."

"The canals are frozen over part of the winter, anyway, as you know," continued the father. "It means that I have always had to be idle many weeks each winter. Now by going to the city, I can get something to do on land."

"Are you sure, father?" asked Mother Van Eyck anxiously.

"Quite sure. The last time I was in Rotterdam, Hein Landman said he would give me work around the wharves any time I was ready for it."

“Rotterdam?” repeated Mother Van Eyck, with a pleased look on her gentle face. “Then Sister Marna and I can visit back and forth. In that place, children, lives the aunt who gave me the pretty tile.”

“It is a little surprise I planned for you, mother,” said Father Van Eyck.

“It was very thoughtful of you,” she replied.

So this is how it came about that Jan and Betje went to the busy city of Rotterdam for a time. Everybody was happy, the children most of all.

CHAPTER XVI

SCHOOL DAYS

The first day in the city Mother Van Eyck started for school with Jan and Betje. They meant to make a short call on Aunt Marna on the way. She lived in a big brick house in a street with a name so long the children couldn't pronounce it.

They crept close to the house so as not to be seen. It would be such fun to surprise Aunt Marna! No, there was nobody at the windows. They felt sure they were safe.

"Well, well," said Aunt Marna, as she let them in. "You don't know how glad I am to see you all."

She hugged Mother Van Eyck first,

then Betje and Jan, and began the rounds a second time.

“You didn’t know we were here until you opened the door, did you?” said Jan.

“Oh yes, I did,” answered Aunt Marna.

The children looked surprised enough.

“But how could you, auntie?” asked Betje. “You couldn’t have seen us without putting your head out of the window and I noticed all the windows were closed.”

Aunt Marna laughed.

“Children who live on boats,” she said, “don’t always know everything there is to know about city ways.”

She took them into a front room and showed them a mirror fastened just outside the window. It was slanted in such a way that she could see who was at her door and what was going on in the street below without taking the trouble of leaning out of the window.

“So, young man,” said Aunt Marna to

Jan, "you weren't such a big surprise as you thought you were. But that doesn't prevent my being just as glad to see you."

"I think the mirror is fine," replied Jan. "I'm going to ask father to put one on the side of the boat."

"First, it is a stork's nest," spoke up Mother Van Eyck, "now a mirror. What next? Your father will have such a funny boat by the time you and Betje get through with it that we won't be allowed to pass through the canals of Holland."

That first day in school, everything was very new and strange. Betje thought there must be at least two hundred pairs of eyes looking at her instead of two dozen. But the other children were not unkind, only a bit curious.

At recess time, they were very friendly and before a week had passed, each of the canal-boat children had found a particular friend. Betje's favorite schoolmate

was Mietje and Jan's was Adrian. Mietje lent Betje her jump-rope until she could have one of her own.

"But I can never jump with my klompen on," declared Betje. "The rope won't get by them."

"Why, of course, it will," said Mietje. "Watch me."

Betje counted while Mietje skipped the rope ten times without failing once. Betje learned in time to do it herself. Sometimes the two girls, for a change, would knit during the noon hour. In this way, the St. Nicholas socks for Father Van Eyck grew fast.

Adrian offered to let Jan ride his bicycle. Like Betje, Jan thought he couldn't manage with his wooden shoes. He had to be very careful, it is true; but after a few tumbles, he felt as secure on the bicycle as if klompen were made to use especially for riding wheels!



But there were other things for the children to do besides play games. They had lessons in arithmetic, reading, and writing. There was a geography class, too. When the lesson for the day was

about Holland, Jan and Betje knew more than all the other children put together. Had they not been through almost every waterway in the whole country?

After a time, the children began to study English. It is taught in many Dutch schools. At first it seemed hard and they thought they could never learn to say *cheese* for *kaas*, *gate* for *poort*, and *old* for *oud*. Many words, on the other hand, like *butter*, *pipe*, and *book* sounded almost like their own *boter*, *pijp*, and *boek*.

“Suppose you children give your mother and myself English lessons in the evenings,” said Father Van Eyck one day.

The children did so. They made funny mistakes, to be sure, but that made it all the more interesting. Besides, Jan and Betje found that by trying to teach others, they learned more rapidly themselves.

CHAPTER XVII

CHURCH

The autumn months flew swiftly by. The frosty days of early winter had now settled down on Holland.

“Hurry, little daughter,” said Mother Van Eyck the first Sunday morning in December, “or we shall be late at church.”

“Must I go to-day, mother?” said Betje. “It is so very cold.”

“What a queer thing for a little Dutch girl to say,” exclaimed Mother Van Eyck. “What will you do when real winter sets in? With your thick mittens, child, you will be comfortable, and as for the new red gown I have just made you, why, its very color is warm.”

Betje hastened to get ready. Soon all

four were on the way. Such beautiful tinkling chimes they heard as they walked through the quiet streets!

“They make me think of little ripples on a sunny canal,” said Mother Van Eyck.

When they entered the church, Betje had to let go her father’s hand, for the men and women did not sit together. She gave it a little squeeze in parting.

“I can *look* at you, anyway,” she whispered. “And you must look over at me once in a while.”

Jan followed his father, proud, indeed, that he was allowed to sit with the men.

The church had never looked so big and bare and cold to Betje as it did to-day. Her fingers and toes felt chilled. There were no stoves and yet she thought she could smell smoke. She sat down beside her mother and hoped the sermon wouldn’t be very long.

Just then a man came up the aisle with

a whole armful of the funniest looking objects Betje had ever seen — that is, in a church.

“What are those queer boxes for, mother?” she asked in a whisper.

Her mother did not answer. The man had stopped close by them. He put one of the strange things under Mother Van Eyck’s feet and then Betje heard him say, “Does the child want one, too?”

Mother Van Eyck nodded her head yes. And then Betje, for the first time, had a good look at a foot warmer — for that is what it was.

On the outside, it looked like a box, as she had noticed. There was a wire handle and openings in the top. In the inside was a small pottery dish which held a piece of burning peat. This fuel, as Betje knew, does not go out easily, once it is well started.

She had to sit on the very edge of her

seat so that her feet would reach the stove. But how warm and comfortable it was! The sermon seemed the shortest she had ever heard.

“Did you have a peat stove, too?” she asked Jan after church was over.

“No, of course not,” said her brother. “They are only for women and girls.”

Just the same, Betje thought he felt cold. If not, why did he stamp his feet and blow on his fingers?

CHAPTER XVIII

MORE SECRETS

It needed no alarm clock or mother's voice to waken Jan and Betje on the morning before St. Nicholas Day. They were up a whole hour earlier than usual. After breakfast, the first thing they did was to lift down their klomp banks from the mantel shelf.

Then such a whispering as went on in the corner farthest away from their mother!

“One – two – three – four – five cents! Ten – fifteen – twenty – twenty-five cents – one kwartje!”

This kept on for about fifteen minutes.

“I make mine just two gulden — two hundred cents,” at last whispered Jan.

“I have two gulden and six cents over,” Betje whispered back.

The children then hunted up their father.

“There is no school to-day, father,” Jan began.

Then Betje took up the story. “And, please, we should like to go around in the shops,” she said.

“Bless the children, mother!” said Father Van Eyck. “You would think they had real money to spend.”

Jan and Betje hung their heads but said nothing.

“I don’t mind, if mother doesn’t,” went on Father Van Eyck.

“You may go,” said Mother Van Eyck, “if you are sure you will not get lost and will be back by noon. You must take good care of your sister, Jan.”

There were no happier children in all Holland that day than Jan and Betje.

Jan had put all his own and his sister's money in his pockets. He first made sure there were no holes in them!

First, the children found a shop with beautiful slippers in the window — green, red, brown, and blue velvet. They went in and asked to look at the green ones. Of course they must match the green socks Betje had finished for her father the week before.

“Where is the string, Jan?” she asked her brother.

“Right here.”

He took from his pocket a piece of cord just the length of Father Van Eyck's old slippers, which would be of help in measuring the new ones. Soon the right size was found.

“How much are these, sir?” Jan asked with a grown-up air.

“Two gulden, my boy.”

“We will take them, if you please.”

The good-natured man laughed when Jan counted out the amount in small coins, few of them larger than a five-cent piece.

“Somebody’s father will have a happy St. Nicholas Day or I shall be greatly mistaken,” he said pleasantly.

The children said good-by to the shopkeeper and left the store. Mother’s present came next. Jan and Betje were trying hard to make up their minds what it should be when they saw a window filled with pretty Japanese teapots and a big sign, “two gulden each.”

“The very thing,” exclaimed Betje. “You know mother broke her best teapot not long ago. I am sure she would like a new one.”

So within ten minutes, they had a second parcel, which Jan hugged close to him so that it would not fall. The teapot had wonderful pictures — a tea garden,

bridge, temple, and a lady with a sunshade, and beautiful gold decorations besides.

What to do with the six cents that were left was the next question.

"I know," said Jan. "Let's buy some St. Nicholas cakes."

There were dozens of different kinds from which to choose, but at last the children picked out some in the form of letters. These were two for a cent, so that they bought an even dozen. The letter cakes spelled "Father" and "Mother."

Just as they were leaving the store, a sight caught their eyes which made them stop short. There at the door stood a big man with a long white beard, dressed in a red coat trimmed with white fur.

"It must be St. Nicholas, Jan," Betje whispered. "What a kind face he has!"

"Is his black servant with him?" said

Jan. "Yes, there he is, with the bundle of rods he carries about for children who have been naughty through the year."

St. Nicholas caught sight of the children and called out, "Good morning."

He was so pleasant that Betje forgot all about being timid.

"Please, dear St. Nicholas," she began. The good saint bent over to hear better what she had to say. His snow-white beard brushed Betje's cheek.

"We are going to put our klompen by the stove to-night," she said, "and I hope you will not forget to fill them."

"And we will put some straw in the shoes for your white horse," added Jan.

"Where is it you live, my dears?" asked St. Nicholas, taking a book from his pocket. The children watched him eagerly.

"O, I am glad you asked that," said

Betje, "for our boat is in a different place from where it was last year."

Good St. Nicholas wrote down the new address and said he would surely not forget the Van Eycks. Then he blew a good-by kiss, and Jan and Betje went home, eager to tell mother all about him.

CHAPTER XIX

ST. NICHOLAS DAY

I wish you might have taken a peep into the cabin of the *Wilhelmina* the next morning. You would surely have thought Jan and Betje were not in their right minds. Such dancing and prancing and clapping of hands! Such talking and laughing and shouting! Piet made *his* share of the noise, you may be sure, barking as wildly as he did the night of the fire.

The klompen were full and there were presents on the table besides. The straw had disappeared and in its place were the lovely gifts. Kind St. Nicholas had ridden on his swift white horse over the roofs of houses and decks of boats, scat-

tering good things for sleeping children far and wide.

“I shouldn’t like his work,” said Father Van Eyck.

“Nor I,” said mother. “He well deserves a whole year of rest.”

“Do look at the lovely little Dutch doll he left for me,” said Betje to her parents for the tenth time. “Isn’t she a dear?”

She held up the doll for them to see. It looked so much like Betje herself that it might have been taken for her small sister. It had the same blue eyes and yellow hair. The dress was red, like Betje’s best one, partly covered with a long brown apron. There was a white cap on the doll’s head and two strings of beads around her neck.

“Oh, but do look at my skates,” broke in Jan, also for the tenth time. “Now the only thing left to wish for is ice.”

Then the children left their new toys for a minute, and hurried to get the pres-

ents they had bought the day before. These had been tucked away over night in the strangest hiding place, but the only one they thought was safe — their cupboard beds! Betje had been very much afraid she might kick the teapot in her sleep, but she found it safe and sound. With her brother's help, she undid the paper wrappings and arranged the pretty things on the table with a circle of letter-cakes around them.

“For *me?*” exclaimed Father Van Eyck, taking up the warm socks and smoothing the velvet slippers.

“For *me?*” repeated Mother Van Eyck, turning the teapot round so that she could admire all the lovely Japanese scenes on it. “I think we have two dear good children, father. What do you say?”

By the way Father Van Eyck kissed and patted the children, I think he thought so, too. Anyway, Jan and Betje



felt glad they had not spent their bank money on foolish little things, as they had been tempted to do more than once during the past few months. Besides the doll and skates, the slippers and teapot, there were all kinds of cakes and other sweets, including a gingerbread girl for Betje and a gingerbread boy for Jan.

Was Piet forgotten by St. Nicholas? No, indeed! He had a brand new collar and so many frosted cookies he didn't want any meat all day. Betje explained to him very carefully what the celebration was all about. As he was a most intelligent dog, he looked as if he understood every word of the story.

CHAPTER XX

ICE BOUND

Several weeks passed by and still there was no ice on the rivers and canals. Jan began to think they would not freeze over that winter. Then one morning he heard his mother's voice calling, "Come, come, wake up, Jan!"

Jan rubbed his eyes sleepily and turned over for another nap.

"Very well, then," said Mother Van Eyck, "we shall have to let some other boy try the new skates."

That was enough. With one bound, Jan was in the middle of the floor. And in almost as short a time as it takes to tell it, he was dressed and out on the canal.

Solid ice at last! Over all the waterways stretched glassy floors as far as the eye could see. The *Wilhelmina* was bound fast. Every man, woman, boy, and girl who owned any kind of skates — good or bad — was out upon the frozen streets that day. Mother Van Eyck skated to market, Father Van Eyck to work, and the children to school.

Jan found his St. Nicholas skates were just as fine as they looked. There wasn't a better pair, he felt very sure, in all Rotterdam. Until he had a little practice, he fell down now and then, but he always picked himself up with a merry laugh. What was a mere tumble or two compared with the fun of skimming over the ice?

"My work takes me to Gouda this afternoon, mother," said Father Van Eyck at the dinner table. "I think I will skate there and back."

"Why don't you?" answered Mother



Van Eyck. "It is by far the shortest and quickest way. Besides, we should like to see if you can bring back a pipe safely."

"A pipe?" echoed the children in the same breath.

"Your mother means one of the twisted Gouda pipes," explained their father. "They have so many turns, it is very hard to keep them from breaking. A little jolt or jar, and snap! you have nothing but pieces. A man or a boy who can skate to Gouda and bring back one of the brittle things whole is thought to be a pretty good skater."

"Why, then, you can do it very easily, father," said Betje. "Are you not the best skater in all Holland?"

"Hardly that, little one. But I will try to get the pipe just the same," replied Father Van Eyck.

They all watched him start off. How tall and straight he was and what fine

long strokes he took! The children did not linger at school that afternoon. They hurried home so as to be on hand when their father should return. Whenever a speck was seen in the distance, they cried out, "There he is! There he is!" Sometimes the speck turned out to be a girl or a woman. Then how they all laughed!

When Father Van Eyck did swing into sight, Betje was the first to make him out. She strained her eyes for a glimpse of the twisted pipe. Yes, there it was, high above his head — and perfectly whole!

"I did it!" Father Van Eyck called out in his hearty voice.

"I knew you would all the time," was Betje's reply. "Are you not the best skater in all Holland?"

"But I thought you were going to bring it back in your mouth," said Jan, with disappointment in his voice.

"Ah, then it would never have come

back at all," said Father Van Eyck. Everybody tries hard to break any Gouda pipe they see moving along the canals."

"I call that rude," said Jan.

"Not so," said his father. "It is only good-natured fun. Many a bump I received on the way back, I can tell you, and I was lucky to carry the pipe whole even above my head."

"We will hang it up on the wall," said Mother Van Eyck proudly. "It is a good omen for the new year."

"If the new year is as good as the old year," spoke up Father Van Eyck, "we shall have no cause to complain."

"I think so, too," said Jan.

"And I," added Betje.

Even Piet showed he was of the same mind by a few short happy barks.

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